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## PACIFIC WEST REGIONAL OFFICE Memorandum

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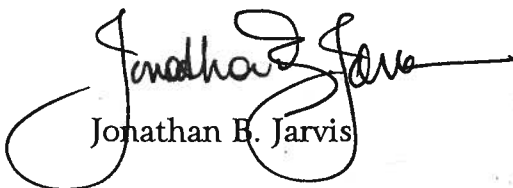
### Memorandum

To: Superintendent, Lake Roosevelt National Recreation Area

From: Regional Director, Pacific West Region

Subject: Environmental Compliance for Updated Fire Management Plan

The finalized *Finding of No Significant Impact* for updating the 2005 Fire Management Plan (adding prescribed fire component) is approved. To complete this particular compliance effort, at the time when the park announces the decision, copies of the *Errata* prepared as technical supplement to the environmental assessment (EA) will need to be directly distributed to all individuals and organizations that received the original EA document.



Jonathan B. Jarvis

Attachment



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

FIRE MANAGEMENT PLAN

Lake Roosevelt National Recreation Area  
Washington

The Department of the Interior, National Park Service (NPS), has prepared this Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) on the Fire Management Plan Environmental Assessment (FMPEA) for Lake Roosevelt National Recreation Area (LRNRA), Washington. This FONSI is a statement of the decision made, other alternatives considered, public involvement in the decision making process, the basis for the decision, the environmentally preferable alternative, and measures to minimize environmental harm.

Due to the programmatic level of the environmental compliance completed, further site-specific analysis may be required before implementing many of the activities proposed in the FMPEA. Also due to the nature of how Lake Roosevelt is managed, many issues will require continued coordination and consultation with the managing partners (Bureau of Reclamation, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Colville Confederated Tribes, and Spokane Tribe) and other interested parties.

PURPOSE AND NEED

Pursuant to NPS fire management policies and guidelines, all units of the National Park System with vegetation that can sustain fire must have a fire management plan. FMPEA provides the policy guidance managers need to make fire management decisions based on current and anticipated conditions.

Vegetation at LRNRA includes at least three fire-prone ecosystems, these being steppe (semi-arid grassland), shrub/steppe, and ponderosa pine forest. Fire plays a critical role in the health and maintenance of all three ecosystems. Thus, it was determined that in certain circumstances a prescribed fire component may be appropriate for LRNRA. Decades of fire suppression have resulted in the need for more active management if healthy forests are to be maintained within the recreation area.

SELECTED ACTION

Lake Roosevelt National Recreation Area will implement Alternative B, identified as the action that best satisfies the Area's long-term management objectives. The strategy outlined, identified, and evaluated in Alternative B of the EA is the same as the parks environmentally preferred alternative. The intended life of the FMPEA is 15-20 yrs. In

accordance with NPS management policies, a fire management program should protect sensitive natural and cultural resources while striving to perpetuate the natural resources and their associated processes and systems. Alternative B, the environmental preferred alternative, will promote the national environmental policy expressed in NEPA (Sec. 101 (b)) by causing "the least damage to the biological and physical environment; it also means that the alternative with best protects, preserves, and enhances historic, cultural and natural resources".

The selected action will involve full suppression actions on all human/natural-caused wildland fires; mechanical treatment of fuels will be performed; and prescribed fire will be used in certain circumstances. All wildland fires would be suppressed as quickly as possible, while ensuring public and firefighter safety, and protection of natural/cultural/historic resources, park developed areas and neighboring private lands.

Under this plan, the NPS will have more management options at its disposal to manage the park's vegetative cover to maintain and/or restore natural and healthy conditions. To assist in achieving this objective, the FMP forms a framework through which areas are identified for possible treatment by mechanical means and/or use of prescribed fire.

The EA is the first step in the planning process in that it identifies areas where the use of prescribed fire techniques to achieve resource management objectives (i.e., fuel reduction) may be appropriate. The EA also identifies in general terms the potential impacts that may be associated with the use of prescribed fire techniques including what steps may be needed to prepare an area for prescribed treatment (e.g., mechanical reduction fuel loads, etc.).

In the next phase of the planning process, each individual parcel identified as a potential project unit in the EA will undergo further analysis as appropriate (cultural, archaeological, biological, and land use), consultation and public involvement prior to initiation of any forest health projects including the use of prescribed fire.

The 33 proposed project units encompass some 1994.5 acres. The size of the units is as follows:

Location	Acres
Bradbury	67.7
Cayuse Cove	5.9
Clark Lake	150.0
China Bend	5.4
Detillion	10.8
Enterprise	77.8
Evans	83.6

Evans CG	25.5
Fort Spokane	379.9
Gifford/Cloverleaf CG	159.7
Haag Cove	65.5
Hunters CG	88.9
Jones Bay CG	10.8
Kamloops Island	21.3
Keller Ferry	8.9
Kettle Falls	144.0
Kettle River CG	27.3
Laughon/Porcupine	31.6
Marcus Bluff	33.1
Marcus Island	41.0
Mill Canyon / Moccasin Bay	35.8
Mission Point	31.0
Na-Bor-Lee	36.4
Napoleon to RR	60.1
North Gorge	51.1
Porcupine CG	48.0
Rickey Point	166.7
Seven Bays	15.9
Sherman Creek	10.5
Snag Cove	15
Sterling Valley	23.9
Whispering Pines	48.1
Total acres:	1994.5

These are gross acreage figures that include things such as roads, structures, and other facilities/features that would be excluded from the actual area to be burned. As the planning proceeds, these units will be broken down into sub-units to identify manageable units where fire could safely be employed after completing further analysis and consultation.

In addition to project areas identified, the NPS may treat additional areas on a case-by-case basis. These projects could be initiated with a request from members of the Five Party Agreement, adjacent land owners or a result of wildland fire. In the event of such a request or a wildland fire, the NPS will assess the situation and may perform fuel reduction activities.

#### OTHER ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

In addition to the proposed action, one other alternative, the "no action" alternative, was examined. Under this alternative, the current policy of aggressive full suppression of all wildland fires, regardless of cause, would continue (as it would under the selected alternative). Prescribed fire would not be available as management tool to benefit natural resources, therefore it was not considered as the environmentally preferred alternative.

Although a wider range of alternatives is sometimes presented when developing fire management plans, analysis of comments and issues identified during scoping led to the conclusion that no other alternatives were feasible at this time.

The basic decision under consideration in the EA is whether to use prescribed fire to help achieve resource management objectives. Thus, the range of alternatives was limited to the addition of prescribed fire as a management tool where determined to be appropriate or continuation of forest management at LRNRA without the use of prescribed fire.

Under either alternative, mechanical treatment of forest and grassland areas may be needed to achieve resource management objectives regardless of whether prescribed fire is used. In some areas where prescribed fire may be appropriate, the fuel build up is such that fire could not be used as a management tool until the fuel loads have been reduced by other means. Each proposed project unit will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis to determine how much pre-treatment is needed and whether fire can be safely employed as an initial management tool.

#### BASIS FOR DECISION

After careful consideration of comments received throughout the planning process, including comments on the EA, the selected action best accomplishes identified management goals and desired future conditions, with the fewest environmental impacts.

#### ENVIRONMENTALLY PREFERABLE ALTERNATIVE

The alternative which causes the least damage to the cultural and biological environment and that best protects, preserves, and enhances resources is Alternative B. In addition, alternative 3 attains the widest range of beneficial uses of the environment without degradation, risk of health or safety, or other undesirable and unintended consequences.

Alternative B is the Environmentally Preferred Alternative, rather than the No Action Alternative, for the following reasons:

- It includes the use of mechanical methods for the treatment of forest fuels in some situations where the use of prescribed fire would not be acceptable, such as where crown bulk density loads are too high to utilize fire alone.
- It provides the best means possible for reducing hazard around bald eagle nests, rare plants, and historical, archaeological, and cultural sites.
- Fire, under prescribed conditions, is used as a tool to reduce forest fuel loads and improve forest health by returning the fire regime to within historical range of variability.
- Mitigation measures are included to help protect cultural resources, soil, air quality and sensitive plants and animals.

Overall, it best meets the purpose for the LRNRA to preserve, conserve, and protect the integrity of natural, cultural, and scenic resources.

#### MEASURES TO MINIMIZE ENVIRONMENTAL HARM

All practicable measures to avoid or minimize environmental impacts that could result from implementation of the selected action have been identified and incorporated into the selected action. Implementation of the selected action would avoid any adverse impacts on wetlands and any endangered or threatened species, or that would result in the destruction or adverse modification of critical habitat of such species.

In addition, measures will be incorporated to prevent adverse effects to cultural resources through avoidance. This will be accomplished by conducting a cultural resource survey for each project unit and developing avoidance stipulations for cultural sites during the Section 106 process. These stipulations may include, but not be limited to, any of the following:

- Foaming of wooden structures and artifacts;
- Clearing of brush around structures and rock art panels;
- Restrictions on the use of heavy equipment on cultural sites;
- Restrictions on the use of hand lines or other ground-disturbing activities on cultural sites;
- Stipulation that all thinning operations be conducted when the ground is frozen and/or covered with a sufficient snow pack to protect the surface; or
- Preservation of brush and trees that cover features on cultural sites.

If it is determined after further analysis and consultation that the cultural resources of a particular unit could not be adequately protected through implementation of the above or similar measures, then proposed forest health activities would be substantially modified or cancelled. In this way, we plan to avoid any cumulative or long-term effects of the fire program on cultural resources.

The NPS will implement all mitigation measures described as part of the preferred alternative in the EA. These measures are designed to minimize impacts to natural and cultural resources. Additional mitigation actions for cultural resources were developed in consultation with the Tribal Historic Preservation Office for the Colville Confederated Tribes. Table 1 provides details of the mitigation actions.

Table 1. Mitigation Measures

Mitigation	Critical Milestones	Responsible Party
Minimize impacts to cultural resources	<p>Measures will be incorporated to prevent adverse effects to cultural resources through avoidance. This will be accomplished by conducting a cultural resource survey for each project unit and developing avoidance stipulations for cultural sites during the Section 106 process. These stipulations may include, but not be limited to, any of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Foaming of wooden structures and artifacts;</li> <li>Clearing of brush around structures and rock art panels;</li> <li>Restrictions on the use of heavy equipment on cultural sites;</li> <li>Restrictions on the use of hand lines or other ground disturbing activities on cultural sites;</li> <li>Stipulation that all thinning operations be conducted when the ground is frozen and/or covered with a sufficient snow pack to protect the surface; or</li> <li>Preservation of brush and trees that cover features on cultural sites.</li> </ul> <p>If it is determined after further analysis and consultation that the cultural resources of a particular unit could not be adequately protected through implementation of the above or similar measures, then proposed activities would be substantially modified or cancelled. In the event that archeological or historic materials are discovered during project activities, work in the immediate vicinity will be discontinued, the area secured, and the SHPO and THPO notified as appropriate.</p> <p>See table 8 for specific strategies of</p>	Planning & Resources Management; Maintenance; Resource & Visitor Protection



Mitigation	Critical Milestones	Responsible Party
	treatment for cultural property types/project type.	
Minimize impacts to threatened and endangered species	<p>Adverse impacts will be mitigated through identification and avoidance of sensitive species in project planning and implementation.</p> <p>When mechanical treatment is proposed in park, the area will be analyzed to determine if suitable habitat conditions exist for Ute ladies'-tresses. If suitable habitat is found to be present, surveys by a qualified botanist will be conducted to determine the presence of this species.</p> <p>To mitigate potential impacts to nests and winter roosting sites of bald eagles, surveys will be conducted each year during spring for nesting sites and the winter communal roosts. Identified nest sites and communal roosts will be avoided by establishing a 400-meter buffer as recommended by the Pacific Bald Eagle Recovery Plan. If thinning activities will occur within the 400-meter buffer, they will be conducted outside of the nesting and winter roosting period and will utilize prescriptions that will reduce ladder fuels around the communal roost areas and remove small trees; thus, freeing up resources for the remaining older growth roosting trees and reducing potential damaging fuel loads.</p>	Planning & Resources Management
Minimize impacts to air quality	Prescribed fires will only be conducted when optimal smoke dispersion periods are present leading to low air quality impacts in the immediate area.	Resource & Visitor Protection
Minimize impacts to water quality	Since prescribed fire is usually conducted under conditions that will not lead to an intense catastrophic fire, soil and plants will be protected from severe erosion events after a fire.	Resource & Visitor Protection
Minimize impacts to soils	<p>Prescribed fires will be conducted to avoid soil damage by any equipment use.</p> <p>Thinning activities will only be conducted on frozen ground or when there is adequate snow cover to minimize ground disturbance.</p> <p>Work will stop should these criteria not be</p>	Resource & Visitor Protection; Maintenance

Mitigation	Critical Milestones	Responsible Party
	met.	
Minimize spread of noxious weeds	In areas that require mechanical treatment prior to burning, noxious weeds will be surveyed to determine the frequency of weeds present before ground disturbing activities are conducted. If weeds are found to be present, measures will be implemented to help avoid spreading and increasing the abundance of the weeds present. Measures such a regular cleaning of equipment, minimal ground disturbance, and avoidance of areas by equipment may be needed. See Tables 6 and 7 for specific strategies to mitigation noxious weeds during project planning.	Resource & Visitor Protection; Maintenance
Minimize impacts to birds	Known raptor nest trees will be identified and protected during any mechanical treatment or prescribed burning. The small size and timing of planned ignitions should limit the negative impacts to raptors. Waterfowl nesting areas will be identified and protected as part of project planning and implementation.	Planning & Resource Management; Resource & Visitor Protection; Maintenance

## PUBLIC REVIEW AND CONSULTATION

Public comment has been requested, considered, and incorporated throughout the planning process. A scoping letter was mailed to interested parties on July 12, 2004. The comments received in response to this letter were used to identify issues that needed to be addressed in the EA and/or FMP.

A notice of availability for the EA was mailed to the public on February 16, 2005. The public review and comment period began on February 21, 2005 and ended on March 27, 2005. Approximately 60 copies of the EA were distributed. Public distribution and notification occurred through websites, press releases, cd copies, hard copies, and letters. On February 17, 2005 a press release was distributed to announce open house meetings at Fort Spokane and Kettle Falls, WA for March 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> respectively. The complete plan, including maps was placed on the NPS Planning, Environment and Public Comment (PEPC) website and linked to the Lake Roosevelt NRA home page.

Public meetings were held at the Fort Spokane District Office on March 9, 2005, and Kettle Falls High School on March 10, 2005. Approximately 13 people attended these meetings. Issues raised at the meetings generally related to the conditions under which prescribed fire might be used, the decision making process, how potential impacts to

adjoining private lands would be taken into account, smoke management and advance notification of adjoining landowners.

Four comment letters were received during the comment period ending March 27, 2005, as well as numerous comments and questions presented verbally at the public meetings. The comments received were analyzed to determine whether any new issues, reasonable alternatives, potential for significant impacts, or mitigation measures were suggested. The public comments received did not identify new issues, alternatives, or mitigation measures, nor did they correct or add substantially to the facts presented in or increase the level of impact described in the environmental assessment. Comments in favor of or against the proposed action or alternatives, or comments that only agree or disagree with National Park Service policy are not considered substantive. Comments were received on the following topics: noxious weeds, slash accumulation, and integrating the National Historic Preservation Act to the National Environment Policy Act. Public comments received resulted in clarification of policy, alternatives, or procedures and did not provide substantive information to change the plan's purpose, goals, objectives, selected alternative, and environmental impact analysis.

All comments received were reviewed and considered by the NPS in the preparation of this FONSI.

Consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) on Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act was undertaken to identify listed plant and animal species that may occur within the Lake Roosevelt National Recreation Area. In addition, a copy of the EA was sent to the USFWS for concurrence that the broad-scale elements of the proposed action would not adversely affect any listed species known or suspected to be in the project areas. Additional consultation will be conducted on specific proposals prior to implementation.

Consultation also occurred with the Washington State Historic Preservation Office and the Tribal Historic Preservation Offices. A copy of the EA was sent to each of these offices to initiate and plan for coordination of survey, eligibility, effect, and mitigation of cultural resources in the project areas. Comments were received from the Tribal Historic Preservation Officer for the Colville Confederated Tribes and Spokane Tribe. Specifically, these comments addressed the need for clarification of NHPA Section 106 and identification of mitigations to minimize impacts to cultural resources. These comments did not raise concerns or provide substantive information not already addressed in the EA. The responses to these comments have been incorporated into this FONSI. Additional consultation will be conducted on specific proposals prior to implementation.

Consultation also occurred throughout the development of the EA with the Colville Confederated Tribes, the Spokane Tribe, the Bureau of Reclamation and the Bureau of Indian Affairs who are managing partners on Lake Roosevelt and the adjoining county governments. Additional consultation will be conducted on specific projects prior to implementation.

The comments received requested clarification of policy and/or procedures and did not raise concerns or provide substantive information not already addressed in the EA.

## IMPAIRMENT

The impacts resulting from the selection action (Alternative B) will not impair any park resource or value necessary to fulfill specific purposes for which the park was established and is to be managed. The impacts documented in the EA will not affect resources or values key to the natural or cultural integrity of the park or alter opportunities for enjoyment of the park. This alternative with the identified mitigation will not impair park resources and will not violate the NPS Organic Act.

## DECISION

Based on the environmental impact analysis, the capacity of the mitigation measures to reduce or eliminate impacts, and with due consideration of public comment and consultations completed, the NPS has determined that the proposed action is not a major federal action that would significantly affect the human environment. There are no adverse cumulative impacts or indirect effects foreseen. Therefore, an environmental impact statement will not be prepared, and the proposed action may be implemented subject to additional analysis and consultation as described herein.

Recommended: Deborah Burd  
Date: 1/10/2009  
Superintendent  
Lake Roosevelt National Recreation Area

Approved: Jonathan J. Jan  
Date: 1/14/09  
Regional Director  
Pacific West Region